





Comics and Wrestling Review

Blog



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April 2010

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So, even though Stephen Sommers (*The Mummy*, *Mummy Returns*, and the abominable *Van Helsing*) is directing and they've got pretty-boy Tatum Channing staring as one of my childhood idols, it is the image at the below link which DEMANDS I go see this movie.



F

 Published December 17, 2007 Uncategorized  1 Comment

My estimated day of death according to Deathclock. It's a little sad that I'll be only a few hours from my birthday, but it seems kind of fitting— like Adams and Jefferson dying on the same day or Shakespeare dying on his own birthday or Batman faking his own death after kicking Superman's ass.

Can't catch me, Death! See ya, sucka!

A quick visit to Warren E.'s blog saw a link to a full-length, English-dubbed fave anime of mine called FLCL. I've been a fan of many anime in the past (Cowboy Bebop, Trigun, early versions of Macross and the handful of films that have broken into the mainstream and garnered positive critical reaction from American film-writers), but, even so, my interest in the form has been one of a toe-dipper, the glancing passer-by. So, I was pleasantly surprised to be reminded of FLCL's existence. Despite numerous runs on Adult Swim, this six-part mini-series has never garnered critical or mass acclaim and the reason is that the damn thing is just so dense and hard to decipher.

The mini is the creation of GAINAX, the production company responsible for the immensely popular Evangelion, and is so far removed from the realm of that other show, that if it weren't for the extraordinary visuals, any self-respecting anime fan would argue against any creative connection between the two. FLCL is a coming of age story; about a young boy growing up in the shadow of his successful, handsome older brother, about the transcendental nature of rock and roll, aliens and rebellion against forces for conformity, about the strangeness of sex and the confusion that boys undergo when first trying to decipher their long-ignored, now seemingly more-necessary-than-life gender opposites.

I first saw this, as I said on Adult Swim, mid-way through the story. I was utterly baffled, something that I'm not used to being when confronted with new media. But the animation, the story and characters, the music (a terrific Japanese band called The Pillows that fuses the styles of the Beatles and 90's era-grunge) really grabbed me and though I didn't understand anything that followed on the remaining episode (and still don't after multiple viewings), I'm pulled by the sentiment of the work. It's strange. It feels smart, it feels honest and true, but I can't tell you why. I can't tell you what half of the metaphors mean. There is, however, a vibe that I totally get and reminds me of how I felt when I was sixteen. FLCL is the product of a wholly different culture than my own (though the anime is Very Western) and though I've little insight into what it means, I know exactly how it feels. I nod at the television and smile.

You can buy FLCL if you look hard enough. I was able to buy one of the two-episode discs from a Tower Records, one from Amazon and had to wait two months for the first disc to ship from a seller in Japan. And then I had to go and buy a English-language translation of the GAINAX conceptual art book (which, ah, takes me back to that particular boyhood dream), which took even longer to get stateside. I haven't taken out my copies in a long while and should, but— I don't know— this isn't exactly a love letter to the show. It's a reminder for the things that are still able to touch that sixteen-year-old nerd in me.





Something E has expressed interest in, and something I suddenly feel obliged to write:

#### In No Particular Order My 15 All-Time Favorite Films and Brief Explanation Why

**Dawn of the Dead** (1978) – My love for zombie films was born after a late-night Halloween viewing of this movie after getting off work from my job at Blowout Video. Despite the fact that Blowout (now Movie Gallery) was one of the interior businesses you find in Wal-Mart these days, I was rarely busy and when not people-watching through the glass partition, scanned the fronts of the VHS tapes for something I hadn't heard of and would maybe like. You might expect such a gig to be right up my alley, but if you're as unhappy with today's Movie Gallery's selections, you'd be positively miserable with the catalog of one of their Wal-Mart outlets. Halloween Night of 1995, knowing I'd be alone in my dorm while my roommate was away, I rented several low-brow horror movies to watch while I snacked on Twizzlers. One of the movies I took home was the 1990 remake of *Night of the Living Dead*.

Now, I didn't know there had even be a remake. I was familiar with the title in the on-the-periphery pop-culture sense, but had never actually seen it. The horror movies I had grown up on were of the crazed-slasher sub-genre that started in the late '70's with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and the first (and great) *Friday the 13th* but had exhausted itself by the late 80's with such retread garbage as *Dr. Giggles*. *Night* (as it's referred to), I knew, was the first of a trilogy of zombie films that began in the 1960's. [Side note: *Night of the Living Dead* was one of the first independent movies ever released and, until the Miramax-led indie craze of the 90's, was also one of the most successful] I thought a black-and-white zombie film might be fun. I can't remember anything else I rented that Halloween (most likely John Carpenter's *Halloween* and I remember vaguely *The People Under the Stairs*), but it was *Night* that stayed with me.

I know this is taking some time, but bear with me.

*Night*, or at least the one I brought home, wasn't in black in white. Like I said, I unknowing brought home the remake. I was disappointed, but I was home alone on Halloween, right? The only other thing to do might be a kegger at Sigma Tau house and both of you know the likelihood I'd go that route. I was glad I did. I was mesmerized. Though the opening, a word-for-word, shot-for-shot recreation of the original, was dull, dimwitted and dopey, I was soon thrown into a deserted (or is it?) farmhouse with one of the all-time great B-list actors, Tony Todd, Patricia Tallman and a host of nobodies as they struggled for a survival as hordes of mindless zombies threatened to wash over them. The movie was fun if not smart, most of the joy coming from Todd's earnest attempt to bring pathos to his situation and Tallman's heart-breaking scream of frustration at the end of the pic. Still, I was taken to their predicament and sought out the original film.

Despite the fact that the original *Night* is in the public domain (which I still find surprising), there wasn't a copy that hadn't be re-cut or colorized to be found in Hattiesburg. Figuring I had the gist of the story (and guys, if you're still with me this far, bless your patience– I doubt any other entry will be so long-winded or roundabout), I found the sequel. This I watched in my childhood home while on a weekend visit with my mother. I waited all day to watch the

movie, figuring it might be more polite to wait til everyone went to bed before I watched “one of those things” while other people might want to watch, I don’t know, *Friends*.

I’m fascinated by the zombie-apocalypse subgenre (and, strangely, there is enough literature to comprise one) for one simple reason: there can be no victory. Subgenres within subgenres, “zombie apocalypse” falls under “survival horror” where the story isn’t how one wall-flower virgin can stave off some supernatural being bent on killing her but instead whether or not she can get away. Defeat is inevitable. You can’t beat zombies any more than you can “beat” a hurricane. They never stop. The tension is always high and only varies depending on the level of your always temporary shelter. They swarm.

The movie centers on the survival of two deserter SWAT members, a television news anchor and her chopper-pilot boyfriend. The four, reluctant to trust each other while the rest of America tears itself apart in desperation, find a mall in rural Pennsylvania and decide to land for supplies. The mall has been overrun by the undead, but our four survivors find inside possible shelter. Clothing, food, a security system, entertainment, guns, a building that serves even today’s culture as a place of refuge (storms, bomb shelter, etc.), they thought they had found a home. After eventually clearing it out, monotony creeps in and despite their every desire being sated, the world they want is the world outside. Disillusioned and their numbers cut to three, they prepare to leave the mall, a long flight out to some hopefully uncontaminated island where they might live like normal people. Before they can, however, the mall is overrun and they struggle to escape.

The effects were silly, the zombie makeup often nothing more than green face-paint (*Dawn* was made for half a million, a ridiculously low budget even in the 70’s), but what makes this a classic is its biting satire of consumerism and the disparity of this country’s wealth (survivors hole up in an indoor shopping mall– living off of the food court and dressing in expensive clothing off specialty store racks– while the hordes bang on the walls, demanding to be let in) AND Romero’s surprisingly successful creation of tension (he’s not exactly known for his deft touch). In none of the other movies which comprise his zombie-apocalypse epic is there ever the same sense of danger to the characters and between characters as found in this movie. I mean, I understood that I was watching a twenty-year old movie on my couch while my mother snored in the next room over but— brrrr . Despite the obvious age of the piece, it’s no movie for the squeamish or the claustrophobic. Three years ago, I met Ken Foree, who played the SWAT character Peter, at the San Diego Comic-Con. Foree has become a frequent direct-to-video horror actor and, though he charged me for a signed autograph of the *Dawn* cast and didn’t care to speak about the movie at all, it was a treat to shake his hand.

The special effects show their age in a day where computers create hordes of zombies on the fly and copious amounts of blood are lazily used to create horror, but *Dawn* remains vital for its message.

Apologies for the length and the lack of grace with the above.

.7

 Published July 12, 2007 Uncategorized  1 Comment

More Who-stuff on the way, but in the meantime, tomorrow we’re getting a new dog.



His name is Jack, but that's undoubtedly going to change. I like him. He's quiet and, I think, needs a pal.



7

Published July 6, 2007 Uncategorized 2 Comments

Because "I Can Haz Cheezburger?" genuinely makes me laugh.



7

6

Published July 6, 2007 Uncategorized 2 Comments



Now that I have a readership (all lovely two of you), I don't know, I suppose I'm interested in maintaining this weblog again. It was only mean to serve as an electronic and, thereby, semi-permanent version of my falling-apart little black idea book. I only ever plan to use it as such, but I'm ravenous for Who-stuff again and trying to figure out why. I figure W will have an idea of what I'm thinking since we've the same shared Who-history. E, coming at this fresh, will have a better idea of why this silly little television show means so much to me if I do some out-loud thinking.

The other night, E and I let a History Channel faux-docu about Star Trek run in the background. I love Trek, I do, but I took slight affront to Armin Shimmerman (or maybe it was Takei— doesn't matter) claiming that no other show had gone 40 years this present summer. Granted, Trek has a global fan-base and a far larger merchandise catalog, but the BBC put out a little show-that-could called Doctor Who 45 years ago and without the twenty-year gap in television production that Trek suffered.

Doctor Who has been treated by the BBC as a children's show since its inception (there's something special about a country when as intelligent a show as Who can be thought of as toddler fodder) and its writing, science and special effects are very much in line with that. Strangely enough, though, Who is the number one *adult* show on the BBC flagship channel with millions tuning in every week. Grown men such as myself and W continue to care about the characters years despite our introduction to them as children and we reminisce about our favorite episodes with the clarity of our own past birthdays. And merchandise? Doctor Who has long been first in the British heart and wallet.

If pressed, I'd have to say that my favorite thing about The Doctor (as he's referred to throughout the show) is not his unwavering dedication to humanity, but his intelligence. He's not one for weapons, using his charm and intellect to outmaneuver his opponents at every turn. One favorite memory of The Doctor has an artificially aged-Doctor knock a captor unconscious by showing him a written mathematical equation. Is it funny? You bet. But it wasn't played for laughs. This character's brain is so deadly that it's often far more effective than any judo chop (not to say I don't love the Kirk's vast judo repertoire) could ever hope to be. The Doctor had an incredible impact on me as a young boy. Brain = Awesome.



He's also the most vocal proponent of Humanity's greatest trait: our insatiable need for knowledge and our complete disregard for danger in order to cross the next horizon. Despite his personality, whether he begrudgingly admires us as Colin Baker was wont to do or "whiz-bang!" as David Tennant can be, he admires what I admire most in people. I don't doubt that he's why I admire it, too. He's a wicked critic of our species, too, as disappointed in us as he is impressed but I'm getting off track (not to mention making him out a little more Christ-like than I'm comfortable with). He's a literal and metaphorical "doctor." It is his role, his function in the universe. In the way that some people are Artists or Explorers or Leaders, he is a Doctor.

So, 'round about 1991, after a series of catastrophic budget cuts and an insufferable actor playing the role (for E: one of the genius gimmicks of the show is that The Doctor has the ability to regenerate his physical form after great injury, allowing a new actor to step into the role whenever needed. Because of the trauma of the process, The Doctor's personality shifts as well, allowing for an evolving dynamic between he and his friends and enemies), Doctor Who was canceled. Three years ago, the series was renewed, continuing to build on the previously established canon. While excited that one of my favorite television programs had returned, I was very disappointed with the product. What was scary and exciting as a child, only now seemed predictable and safe. Christopher Eccleston was an excellent Doctor, but the writing was... blech. I assumed that I was looking back on my memories of The Doctor more fondly than they deserved (as I've come to discover with GI Joe, Transformers and the Spider Friends) but decided to stick with it anyway; enjoy what I could and ignore the rest. And so the first two seasons went. A new actor, the previously mentioned David Tennant, stepped into the role, but the show never seemed to improve or make that step back to the quality that I remembered the previous series having.

Until now, this third new season. After dumping companion Billie Piper (E: most of the time, The Doctor, in order to stave off the loneliness of being first a renegade and now the last of his kind, travels with a companion, sometimes human, sometimes not), Freema Agyeman came aboard, providing a pleasant change from Piper's blonde, starry-eyed gooeyness. Note: despite numerous attempts otherwise, The Doctor is no good at romance. While pleasant, Freeman's first episode (the first of this season) was uninspired. The second, a trip to meet Shakespeare and to offer an explanation for a missing play Loves Labours Won (no fiction here, this is a legit mystery) was equally weak. The third episode, however, titled "Gridlock", was the first step to this series' salvation.

Now, it's understandably difficult to write dangerous situations for a character as smart as The Doctor, situations that seem truly dire, but not impossible. Seventy years of Superman comics is proof positive of that. The mystery of this episode was a capital-M mystery. Many episodes these past two years have been a repeating pattern of evil makes it self known, Doctor knows exactly what's going on and how to fix it, and the tension is instead whether or not he can do so in time. Fortunately, that's not what makes this guy so appealing. Of course he'll fix it in time. The mystery is the matter: how dangerous, how interesting, how hard to solve. Since the third episode, I feel like I'm solving the problem WITH The Doctor rather than he acting as a Deus Ex Machina for his own stories and stealing away any real sense of discovery his audience might experience. And more than that... despite being 900+ years old in the body of a thirty-year-old, he's starting to feel the wear of his existence and of this unspoken role as Doctor for the universe. He's lonely and the companions now seem more important than ever. Excellent episodes this season have dug into the pain that he carries being so old and traveled and suddenly the last of his race. Mystery is the only thing he has

left. Tennant has done with the Doctor that no one since Peter Davison has been able to do: make me thankful for him, while making me feel guilty for needing him.

(I know that by not describing some of the episodes that really hit home, I'm making it more difficult to explain what I like and what I don't like, but I've W's own sense of mystery to consider.)

I feel similarly in that too much of the world is known to me. Lately, I'm less interested in realist fiction because there seems little mystery in it anymore. The only thing left is how people will react to how the world is rather than how the world can be. It's become a sad repetition of emotional patterns. I need the fantastic at this point in my life because I need that mystery, I need to be forced to remember what potential is in fiction, what strange shit that I can just throw in because it interests me. While I should certainly limit myself to true, genuine reactions for my characters to have in the light of these worlds, I should not limit myself to the types of worlds they can react to.

But I also just love Doctor Who again, which I was afraid I was no longer capable of doing.

PS. He's on a great number of occasions, saved the world while in his jimjams.



4

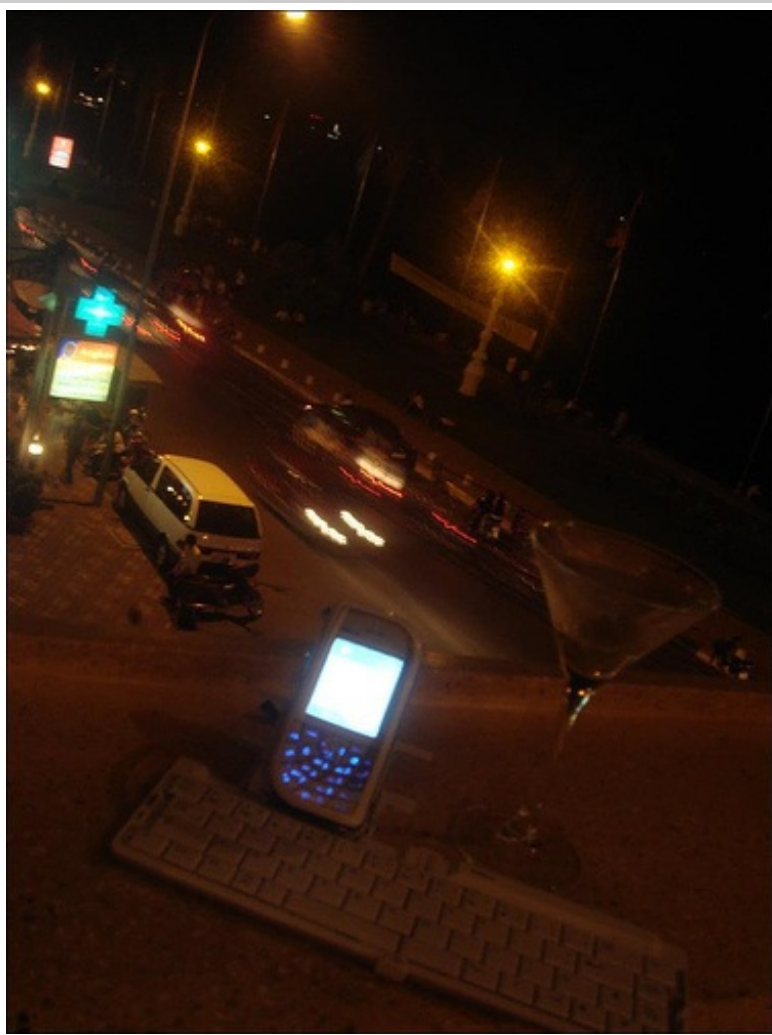


Published April 1, 2007 Uncategorized



2 Comments

Something to work towards.



4

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Just for bookkeeping's sake: am sick. One full week now.

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